



Mercy Medical Center Project SEARCH

Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines Public Schools, Easter Seals Iowa and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services have partnered together to bring Project SEARCH to the Des Moines area. This collaborative effort was initiated in the fall of 2012, and currently involves twelve students who are interning at Mercy Medical Center in Des Moines. These students are being provided a range of hands-on job experiences; developing work skills necessary for future employment.

Mercy Medical Center Project SEARCH offers students (18-21 years old), that have completed their graduation requirements, a one-year school-to-work program that takes place entirely at Mercy Medical Center. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and relevant job-skills training obtained through three strategically designed internships.

The national Project SEARCH program began in 1996 by Erin Reihle, Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She had a number of entry level positions to fill and worked with the Great Oaks Career Campuses and the Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disability Services to provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to participate in the workplace.

The program was so successful that the model was adopted in 40 states and four countries including the National Institute of Health – Clinical Center, Xavier University, the Federal Department of Labor, and the University of Rochester Medical Center.



Suzy Frein has been employed at Mercy for 25 years. She is currently the manager at the Campus Clinic. Suzy has been very pleased with her participation with Project SEARCH. "I wasn't expecting this kind of success," she said. "The interns do a great job with whatever I give them, and they are always eager to do more." Suzy's current intern, Emily, has gone above and beyond her expectations. "I would hire Emily in a second, if I had an opening in the clinic." Suzy is excited to see the growth of the students involved in this program, and looks forward to hearing of their many successes.



Carmen Parrott attended Roosevelt High School and the Des Moines Public Schools Students Transition to Employment Program (S.T.E.P) before joining the Project SEARCH team. She started her internship experience at Starbucks, and is currently working in the Mail Service department for her second rotation. Carmen has really enjoyed her time at each job site. "I really liked cleaning tables and getting the milk ready when I worked at Starbucks," she said. "In the mailroom, I am learning about many different departments throughout the hospital while sorting mail." Carmen cherishes the relationships she has built throughout this experience. "All of the staff at Starbucks were very helpful, my co-worker in the mailroom makes work fun, and my job coach (provided by Easter Seals Iowa) shows me how to do things the right way." Carmen is looking forward to completing the program and achieving her goal of obtaining employment.

Carmen and her classmates will graduate May 30, 2013, and we will continue working with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Easter Seals Iowa to maximize their employment opportunities.

